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ABSTRACT

Employee deviance may reflect either acts of employee theft or of production deviance. Employee theft refers to the unauthorized taking of cash, merchandise, or property. Production deviance refers to counterproductive activities which serve to slow the rate or quality of output, such as intentionally doing slow or sloppy work or using drugs on the job. Both types of employee deviance can be costly to employers in terms of losses in profits, inventory, morale, and image. In this study, a four-stage survey mailing process was used to determine the incidence, amount, and types of employee deviance occurring within fast food restaurants and supermarket stores. Employees (N=872) from 341 fast food restaurants and from 234 supermarkets completed and returned anonymous questionnaires which asked them to indicate the types of on-the-job theft and counterproductive behaviors in which they had engaged. The results indicated that many employees from both industries admitted to costly theft and other counterproductive work practices. The most common types of employee deviance were practices related to the theft of company cash and property, time theft, and general counterproductivity. Specifically, for fast food units 62 percent of respondents admitted to some type of cash or property theft; for supermarket stores 43 percent admitted to some type of cash or property theft. Respondents perceived employee theft to be prevalent in their workplace. The results from the fast food and supermarket industries suggest that an anonymous survey approach may be useful as a means of determining base rates of employee deviance.
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An Empirical Approach to Determining Employee Deviance Base Rates

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Abstract

A four-stage survey mailing process was used to determine the incidence, amount, and types of employee deviance occurring within the fast food restaurants and supermarket stores. Employees from 341 fast food restaurants and from 234 supermarkets completed and returned anonymous questionnaires which asked them to indicate the types of on-the-job theft and counterproductive behaviors in which they have engaged. The results showed that many employees from both industries admitted to costly theft and other counterproductive work practices. The most common types of employee deviance were practices related to the theft of company cash and property, time theft, and general counterproductivity. Specifically, for fast food units, 62 per cent of respondents admitted to some type of cash or property theft; for supermarket stores, 43 per cent admitted to some type of cash or property theft. Implications of these findings to the measurement of base rates of employee deviance are discussed.

An Empirical Approach to

Determining Employee Deviance Base Rates

The purpose of this paper is to describe a method for determining the base rates of acts of employee deviance. Employee deviance may reflect either acts of employee theft or of production deviance. Employee theft refers to the unauthorized taking of cash, merchandise, or property. Production deviance refers to counterproductive activities which serve to slow the rate or quality of output (e.g., intentionally doing slow or sloppy work, using drugs on the job). Both types of employee deviance can be costly to employers in terms of losses in profits, inventory, morale, and image.

There are several reasons it is important to determine the true extent of these acts of employee deviance. Establishment of base rates may be used to document the seriousness of the employee deviance problem in terms of finding and implementing practical solutions to employee deviance. Base rates are also used in setting norm-referenced cutoff scores in pre-employment integrity tests (Ash, 1989; Jones, 1989). Thus, these integrity tests should ideally screen out the proportion of applicants who would be likely to steal or engage in counterproductive activities on the job.

The measurement of the frequency of acts of employee deviance, however, has been problematic. Commonly used measures (e.g., shrinkage, employee apprehensions) do not measure acts of production deviance such as slow work or other counterproductive work practices. They also may not accurately reflect the true incidence of employee theft practices; for example,

measures of inventory shrinkage may reflect losses due to accounting errors or mismanagement, as well as theft. The number of employees apprehended for theft accounts only for those employee thieves who are caught; it is difficult to know the number who go undetected. Pre-employment polygraph admissions may result in underreporting of theft and production deviance as the questions rarely survey the wide range of deviant behaviors. Nevertheless, using such approaches, researchers have obtained base rates of employee theft ranging from 12 to 50 percent (e.g., Ash, 1976; Jones & Joy, 1988; Tatham, 1974). Estimates of production deviance have not been obtained using these approaches.

What is needed then is a means of determining employee deviance base rates which includes both employee theft and production deviance, as well as measuring otherwise undetected acts of employee deviance. A promising approach is the anonymous theft survey method, as used by Hollinger and Clark (1983), to obtain estimates of various acts of employee deviance across several industries. Current employees in surveyed industries completed questionnaires about their deviance activities. Depending on the industry, a 65 to 75 per cent response rate was obtained. Hollinger and Clark found average employee theft rates of 28 per cent for manufacturing, 33 per cent for hospitals, and 35 percent for retail. For production deviance, they obtained average estimates of 65 per cent, 69 per cent, and 82 per cent for these same industries.

The preliminary studies described below use an anonymous survey approach to determine employee deviance base rates for two industries. Two major areas of interest were to: (1) determine the extent and amount of employee deviance, and (2) identify the types of theft and counterproductive practices engaged in by employees.

Study 1: Fast Food Survey

Method

Subjects

Employees from two national fast food organizations participated in the survey. Survey participants were located mainly in the Midwest and the West.

One employee was randomly selected from each fast food unit using a stratified random sampling approach; the strata were the major job categories for each company. Only one employee was selected from each fast food unit to decrease employee suspicion of company involvement in the study. This also minimized the chance of employees talking among coworkers about the survey and enhanced the likelihood the selected employees would respond in an open, frank, and truthful manner.

A combined total of 872 participants were selected from both companies. For Company A, the total sample consisted of approximately 20 percent Store or Assistant Managers, and the remainder as Production Employees (including Shift Leaders). For Company B, the total sample consisted of approximately 40 percent Production Employees, and 20 percent each of Shift Leaders, Assistant Managers, and Store Managers.

Participants were unaware that the survey was being conducted by London House for the fast food companies. The survey process was designed so that it would appear to participants that they were involved in an anonymous study conducted by DePaul University.

Survey Questionnaire

The survey consisted of a number of questions designed to provide information about employee characteristics, theft practices, and other relevant areas. Three questions asked employees' opinions about the fairness of their employers' treatment of employees and beliefs about the acceptability of counterproductive work practices. Demographic information (e.g., current job title, age, marital status) was obtained to describe employees. Other items asked for frequency admissions (e.g., very often, often, occasionally, seldom, never) of various types of on-the-job theft or counterproductive behaviors (e.g., taken merchandise, faked ill, argued with customers). Other items asked for dollar estimates of the amount of money and merchandise the survey respondent and that the "average employee" takes without permission. A general comments section was also included to allow respondents to elaborate or comment on any other thoughts or experiences about employee theft or the survey.

Each survey was assigned a unique arbitrary code number. The purpose of the code number was to identify duplicate survey returns (e.g., a single respondent returns two surveys) and to link returned survey responses with other information (e.g., store shortages, turnover). The codes were placed on the back of each survey using either a pin-pricking technique or invisible ink. The implemented coding procedure, which was coordinated with DePaul University, assured that no researcher could link employees with their survey responses; this assured the anonymity of employees' survey responses. This coding method proved acceptable to the subjects, companies, and reseachers participating in such a sensitive base rate study.

Survey Mailing

A four-stage process was used to distribute the surveys and to enhance the probability of a high return rate. The surveys were mailed in Winter, 1987 for Company A and Spring, 1988 for Company B.

Stage 1. An advance letter was sent to the employees selected to participate in the survey. The advance letter informed recipients they had been selected to participate in a general study regarding employee theft and that they would shortly be receiving a questionnaire. The letter also emphasized that the study was being conducted by an academic institution and that all responses would remain entirely anonymous and confidential.

Stage 2. One week later, a packet of survey materials was sent to participants. This packet included: a cover letter which reiterated the purpose and confidentiality of the survey as well as instructions for completion of the survey, a copy of the survey, a postage paid return envelope, and a dollar bill. The $1.00 was enclosed as an incentive for completing the questionnaire.

Stage 3. A first follow-up letter, the survey, and a postage paid return envelope were sent to participants who had not yet returned a survey.

Stage 4. A second follow-up letter, the survey, and a postage paid envelope were sent to the survey participants who still had not returned a survey. Follow-up letters were designed to encourage participant response and reemphasized the purpose and confidentiality of the study.

Results

The four-stage survey process yielded a 48% response rate. Of 872 total survey participants, 75 letters or surveys were returned as undeliverable. A total of 384 surveys were completed and returned, out of

797 total surveys sent and delivered to participants.

Returned surveys were not included in the statistical analyses if the respondent indicated he or she was not currently working primarily in the fast food industry. Using this criterion, 43 surveys were dropped from the analyses. Thus, a total of 341 surveys were analyzed.

To assure that employees who responded to the survey were not substantially different from employees who did not respond, comparisons were made for each company and for the total sample between respondents and non-respondents on a number of store and demographic variables. These variables were provided by the participating companies. These included overrings, mysterious disappearances (shortages), store location, store size, number of store robberies, job title, length of tenure, gender, and age. There were no significant differences (as shown by t-tests and chi-squares) between those who returned surveys and those who did not return surveys for the total sample or for either company.

Demographics

About 55% of the fast food respondents were crew members, 19% assistant managers and 26% store or district managers. Most of the respondents (over 70%) had been employed more than one year. About 45% of the respondents worked more than 40 hours per week. About 67% of the respondents reported working evenings/nights or varied shifts. Fifty-six per cent of the sample was younger than 24 years. There were more females than males (57% and 43%, respectively). About 43% of respondents had some college. Thirty per cent of respondents indicated two or more employers during the past year. Thus, a substantial percentage of the respondents worked more than 40 hours, were female, were younger than 24 years, or were college educated.

Types of Deviant Behaviors

Item Admissions. Simple frequency analyses revealed substantial theft admissions for many of the items covered in the survey. (See Table 1.) Based on the survey responses for all 341 fast food respondents, the most frequently admitted types of employee deviance are: 78% admitted to arguing with customers, co-workers or supervisors; 71% of the respondents admitted to coming to work late; and 54% admitted to eating food without paying. Other notable admission percentages include 36% admitting to not reporting wasted company materials; 34% admitting to seeing co-workers steal company property; 30% indicating using their employee discount for friends; 29% admitting to faking illness and calling in sick; 23% admitting to taking supplies for personal use; 23% admitting coming to work hungover from drugs or alcohol; 22% admitting doing slow, sloppy work on purpose; and 21% admitting to being absent without an excuse.

Factors. Items were logically grouped into these five a priori factors: (1) Cash/Property Theft--stealing company property, merchandise (including food) or money; (2) Theft Support--helping others steal; (3) Time Theft--wasteful use of company time; (4) Counterproductivity--work behaviors associated with poor performance; and (5) Other--other dishonest activities. (Refer to Table 1 for items grouped with their factors.) If a respondent admitted to any of the acts grouped under a given factor, he or she was categorized as admitting to that factor. Table 2 lists the percentage of respondents who admitted to any type of theft on the factors.

To summarize Table 2, 84% of respondents admitted to performing behaviors under the Poor Job Performance factor (e.g., arguing or fighting with others, alcohol or drug use) and 78% admitted to some type of Time Theft (e.g., tardiness, unexcused absences). Sixty-two per cent admitted to

some type of Cash/Property Theft (e.g., taking merchandise, eating food); however, excluding the eating of food, 35% of respondents admitted to some type of Cash/Property Theft. Fifty-two per cent admitted to Theft Support (e.g., not reporting theft, seeing others steal). Almost all respondents (96%) admitted to some employee deviance (i.e., they admitted to one or more items).

Dollar Amounts. Survey participants were asked to estimate the value of stolen merchandise or cash for a typical week. Table 3 displays the approximate dollar amounts fast food employees admitted taking in a typical week without permission, and the respondents estimates of how much money or merchandise the "average employee" takes in a typical week from the employer without permission. Items were combined to provide estimates of the total value of money and merchandise taken.

To summarize the results presented in Table 3, 7% of respondents indicated they themselves take from $10 to $50 per week. However, 52% of respondents indicated that the "average employee" takes cash and merchandise valued from $10 to $100 per week. Respondents seem to perceive that the "average employee" takes substantially more property and cash than the respondents themselves do.

Discussion

The results are based on the survey responses of 341 employees from two fast food companies. It is difficult to know how representative these two companies are of the entire fast food industry particularly since the surveys were conducted at the companies' requests. As a result, the findings in this preliminary study cannot be extrapolated to the fast food industry as a whole. Thus, the finding are preliminary, but they can be

considered suggestive of the extent of employee deviance in this industry.

Results indicated that the anonymous survey approach can yield substantial admissions of employee theft and counterproductivity. Many of the fast food employees admitted to theft and counterproductive behaviors. Arguing with others and tardiness were admitted to by a majority of respondents. These are behaviors associated with production deviance that are not typically measured in standard measures of employee deviance. Also, over half admitted to eating food without paying for it. This may reflect the strong opportunity for this type of theft in fast food restaurants.

Also, the fast food employees perceived substantial amounts of theft in their workplaces. In fact, the respondents seemed to perceive that the "average employee" takes substantially more cash and property than they themselves do. The actual amount taken probably falls between these extremes. Employees may underestimate the value of their own theft and overestimate the value of others' theft. The implication is that this perceived prevalence may be related to the perceived acceptability of theft within fast food establishments. The finding that a third of respondents saw others steal company cash or property and that over half admitted to some type of theft support behavior suggests that theft is somewhat tolerated by employees, management, or both. Reasons for the prevalence of theft support are suggested in a study which used the same fast food data set (Slora, 1988). In that study, beliefs about management fairness and attitudes were related to specific theft and counterproductive practices. That is, employees may steal because they feel that management "owes them one" or because they believe that others at times engage in such "unacceptable" practices.

Study 2: Supermarket Survey

Method

Subjects

Supermarket companies were recruited to participate in this study with the cooperation of a major trade association, the Food Marketing Institute. The seven participating companies were instructed to randomly select one employee from each supermarket store, excluding those employees who were store managers, department heads, warehouse employees, or had less than two months tenure. As in Study 1, only one employee was selected from each store. The participating companies were provided with written instructions on how to randomly select the survey participants. When needed, a list of random numbers was also provided to the companies. Thus, a combined total of 504 supermarket employees (consisting of employee one from each supermarket store) was randomly selected by the companies to receive surveys. The survey participants were from a variety of regions in the U.S., including the Northeast, Midwest, Southwest, and South.

Survey Questionnaire

The survey questionnaire was almost identical to the survey used in Study 1. The only changes were in the coding of some of the demographic variables (e.g., respondents indicated the exact date of birth rather than years). The items of employee deviance frequency admissions and dollar estimates were the same as in Study 1.

Coding of the surveys, however, was only used to allow for comparisons and analyses across and within companies. The appropriate company codes were placed on the back of each survey using invisible ink. Individual employees were not distinctively coded. The coding procedures assured that

no researcher could link employees with their survey responses, thus assuring the anonymity of employees' survey responses.

Survey Mailing

A four-stage survey process, as used in Study 1, was used to mail the surveys to the participants. The survey was implemented in the late Fall of 1988 through early Winter 1989.

Results

The four-stage survey process yielded a 59% return rate for the supermarket employees. Of 504 surveys mailed to participants, 19 letters or surveys were returned as undeliverable. A total of 296 surveys were completed and returned, out of 485 total surveys sent and delivered to participants. Fifteen of these 196 surveys were determined to be duplicate survey returns; that is, the same person returned two completed surveys. (Surveys that shared the same company number, birthdate, and demographic information were judged to be from the same person.) Thus, employees from 281 stores completed and returned usable surveys.

Parenthetically, it was not possible to compare respondents to non-respondents because the participating companies did not provide store or demographic information for the selected survey participants due to concerns over confidentiality.

Surveys were not included in the analyses if the respondent indicated he or she was not currently working primarily in the supermarket industry. Surveys completed by respondents employed in a store security capacity also were not used in the data analyses. Moreover, all of one company's respondents were in the security field; further examination showed these

employees had not been randomly selected using the instructions provided by the researchers for participation in the survey. Thus, a total of 234 surveys from the supermarket employees of six companies were used for the subsequent data analyses.

Demographics

About 36% of the 234 supermarket respondents were front end workers (Cashiers and Baggers), and 18% had supervisory titles (e.g., Bakery Manager, Assistant Grocery Manager). Most of the respondents (over 63%) had been employed more than one year. About 56% of the respondents worked under 40 hours per week. About 60% of the respondents reported working evenings/nights or varied shifts. Also, 71% of the sample was 30 years old or younger. There were more females than males (53% and 47%, respectively). About 85% of respondents had completed high school. Twenty-six percent of respondents indicated two or more employers during the past year. Thus, a sizable percentage of the respondents were high school graduates, worked less than 40 hours, were female, or were 30 years old or younger.

Types of Deviant Behaviors

Item Admissions. Simple frequency analyses showed substantial admissions on several survey items. (See Table 4.) The most frequent admissions of employee theft and production deviance among the 234 supermarket respondents were: 70% of the respondents admitted to coming to work late, 61% to arguing with co-workers or supervisors, and 37% to arguing with customers. Other notable admission percentages include 35% admitted to eating food without paying, 30% admitted to not reporting wasted company materials, 26% admitted to faking illness and calling in sick, and 23%

admitted to doing slow or sloppy work on purpose. Also, 18% admitted coming to work hungover from alcohol, 18% admitted to causing damage while "horsing around", 17% admitted to being absent without an excuse, and 17% admitted to not reporting theft by others.

In interpreting these figures, it should be noted that the percentages refer to the aggregate percent across all supermarket stores and companies of this sample. These figures should be interpreted as reflecting the industry as a whole and not as necessarily being representative of a single company. For example, the range of percentages across companies for a few items are: (a) 19% to 43% admitting to eating food without paying, (b) 16% to 38% admitting to seeing co-workers steal company property, (c) 59% to 80% admitting to coming to work late, (d) 16% to 38% admitting to faking illness and calling in sick, (e) 29% to 47% admitting to arguing with customers, (f) 51% to 68% admitting to arguing with co-workers or supervisors, and (g) 23% to 36% admitting to not reporting wasted company materials. However, the company percentages should be interpreted with caution since the company sizes ranged from 24 to 134 stores.

Factors. Items were grouped into five a priori factors as in Study 1. If a respondent admitted to any of the acts grouped under a given factor, he or she was categorized as admitting to that factor. Table 5 lists the percentage of respondents who admitted to any type of deviance on the factors.

To summarize Table 5, 75% of respondents admitted to performing behaviors under the Counterproductivity factor (e.g., arguing or fighting with others, on-the-job alcohol or drug use) and 77% admitted to some type of Time Theft (e.g., tardiness, unexcused absences). Forty-three percent admitted to some type of Cash/Property Theft (e.g., taking merchandise,

eating food); however, excluding the eating of food, 27% of respondents admitted to some type of Cash/Property Theft. Thirty-nine percent admitted to Theft Support (e.g., not reporting theft, seeing others steal). Almost all respondents (94%) admitted to some employee deviance (i.e., they admitted to one or more items). Percentages admitting to these factors within the companies ranged from 29% to 53% for the Cash/Property Theft factor, 24% to 53% for the Theft Support factor, 67% to 82% for the Time Theft factor, 71% to 77% for the Counterproductivity factor, and 20% to 37% for the "Other" factor.

Dollar Amounts. Survey participants were asked to estimate the value of stolen merchandise or cash for a typical week. Table 6 displays breakdowns in terms of the approximate dollar amounts supermarket employees admitted themselves or "average employees" taking in a typical week without permission. Items were combined to provide estimates of the total value of money and merchandise taken.

To summarize the results presented in Table 6, 3% of respondents indicated they themselves take from $10 to $50 per week ($50 was the maximum amount of total weekly theft admitted to). However, 35% of respondents indicated that the "average employee" takes a total value from $10 to $300 per week. The range across companies of the dollar amount respondents admitted themselves taking weekly was $.08 to $1.43. The range across companies respondents indicated the "average employee" taking weekly was $7.20 to $39.94. Respondents seem to perceive that the "average employee" takes substantially more property and cash than the respondents themselves do.

Other calculations were made on the basis of the dollar amount of theft admissions to estimate the total cost of these theft practices to organizations. These are summarized in Table 7.

To summarize the estimates presented in Table 7, the average amount of cash and merchandise taken by a single respondent annually is estimated at $44.72 (based on a reported mean weekly amount of $ .86). The estimate of the annual cost of theft per store, based on 150 employees per store, is $6,708. Thus, a company of 25 supermarket stores may have $167,700 in estimated total losses due to employee theft, a company of 50 supermarket stores may have $335,400 in estimated total losses due to employee theft, and a company of 100 supermarket stores may have $670,800 of estimated total losses due to employee theft.

If perceptions of the "average employee" are used, the average amount of cash and merchandise taken annually by a single "average employee" is $1,209 (based on a reported mean weekly amount of $23.25). The estimated annual cost per store, given 150 employees per store, is $181,350. Thus, a company with 25 supermarket stores may have estimated total losses of $4,533,750 due to employee theft, a company with 50 supermarket stores may have estimated total losses of $9,067,500 due to employee theft, and a company of 100 supermarket stores may have estimated total losses of $18,135,000 due to employee theft.

Discussion

Substantial admissions of employee deviance were obtained from 234 supermarket employees of six companies. Forty-three percent admitted to some type of cash/property theft and 39% to some type of theft support

behavior. Also, about one out of five (18%) admitted coming to work hungover from alcohol or to causing damage while horsing around. Thus, employees admitted to a variety of theft and production deviance activities.

It appears that these supermarket employees perceive employee theft to be prevalent in their stores. Almost a third saw co-workers steal company property or merchandise. Perceptions of the amount taken by the "average employee" were substantially higher than respondents' estimates of their own value of stolen goods. This may reflect the perceived prevalence of theft in supermarkets as well as the acceptability of theft practices among workers. Findings from this supermarket data are reported elsewhere that show that beliefs about company fairness and employees' acceptance of theft are related to specific theft and counterproductive behaviors (Slora & Boye, 1989).

The findings obtained from the survey of supermarket employees are suggestive of the prevalence of employee deviance in the supermarket industry as a whole. The incidence of these practices varies across companies. The reported ranges across companies for the survey items and factors supports this contention.

It is possible that the reported supermarket industry percentages based on the sample used in this study may be underestimates of percentages typical of the supermarket industry as a whole. It is likely that the companies who agreed to participate were highly interested in employee theft problems. Such companies are more likely to be security conscious and to implement stringent store security measures. Also, two of the six companies in the analyzed sample have used some sort of pre-employment integrity screening. Parenthetically, the proportion in the sample using integrity tests reflects the findings of a survey conducted by the Food Marketing

institute (1989) of its membership; they found that 30.2% of supermarkets used pre-employment integrity tests. In the analyzed supermarket survey sample it is likely that fewer applicants were hired that would later steal in the job in these two companies. This contention is supported by a quasi-experimental analysis of this data (Jones & Slora, 1989) which showed that the test-using companies had significantly lower employee theft monetary loss estimates.

General Discussion

Using an anonymous survey approach, substantial admissions were obtained for both fast food and supermarket employees. The findings across the studies were similar in that a substantial portion of respondents admitted to some type of cash or property theft and to theft support activities. In both studies, about three-quarters of respondents admitted to various counterproductive work practices. Also, respondents perceived employee theft to be prevalent in their workplaces.

Differences in the findings between industries may be attributed to, in part, differences in the opportunities for stealing. For example, over half of the fast food employees admitted to eating food without paying for it; for supermarket employees a little over a third admitted to eating food. This is not surprising given that much food in the supermarkets is already packaged and usually not being processed or cooked as in fast food restaurants.

However, it should be noted that these samples are not directly comparable due to the different number of companies in the samples, the differing geographic locations, and the time lag of about a year between the two surveys. Thus, any differences must be interpreted with caution.

Further research is suggested on larger nation-wide samples to allow for more direct comparisons between industries.

Advantages of Surveys

These findings from the fast food and supermarket industries suggest that an anonymous survey approach may be useful as a means of determining base rates of employee deviance. The substantial response rates and frequency of admissions show that employees are willing to report their deviant activities on a self-report measure. Given the self-report nature of such a measure and its possibly incriminating nature, it is surprising the numbers of employees that do admit to such acts of employee deviance. It is possible the actual incidences of employee deviance are much higher. Also, employees admitted to a variety of deviant work behaviors, indicating they were open to answering queries on a range of behaviors.

Another useful feature of such a survey approach to measure base rates of employee deviance is that it can measure otherwise undetected acts of employee deviance. For example, production deviance is difficult to measure; commonly used estimates rely on supervisory ratings and personnel records of counterproductivity. The findings of these surveys of fast food and supermarket employees showed substantial numbers admitting to arguing, doing slow or sloppy work on purpose, and other counterproductive work behaviors. In addition, the survey approach yielded estimates of employee theft substantially higher than most methods. For example, a trade association survey found an average of only three instances of employee theft per supermarket store (Food Marketing Institute, 1989) which is substantially lower than the findings here would suggest.

The surveys may have produced the acceptable response rates because of their anonymous nature and because of the two follow-up surveys. Subjects

were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality and survey materials appeared to be from a major university. The follow-ups may have further expressed to subjects the importance of these surveys. Future research should explore the importance of anonymity in ensuring an adequate response rate.

This survey method, as with any survey, is not a panacea. The logistics of ensuring anonymity, while tracking responses in a four-stage survey process, can be quite complex and costly. Also, it is difficult to know if the respondents differed in some relevant way from non-respondents. It is suggested that wherever possible some comparisons be made to ensure the comparability of groups by drawing upon a sample base where some store or demographic characteristics are known of non-respondents.

Implications

Such a survey approach offers promise as a means of determining base rates of employee deviance, as well as establishing research constructs. The determination of employee deviance base rates is important not only to security professionals but also to psychologists who must determine the usefulness of selection tests. Some psychologists (e.g., Murphy, 1987) have suggested that some psychological tests have limited utility when base rates are low; this argument has been applied to the utility of pre-employment integrity tests (Manhardt, 1989; Murphy, 1989). However, this argument is moot if the base rate is substantial and reflects the selection ratio (Ash, 1989; Murphy, 1989). The surveys described here found substantial employee deviance base rates for two industries. The finding of substantial base rates of employee theft and counterproductivity suggests that valid and reliable integrity tests that use norm-referenced cutoff scores (cf. Jones, 1989) are useful for the purpose of selecting applicants less likely to

engage in dishonest activities on the job. In addition, the establishment of employee deviance base rates and the identification of specific behaviors allows for the application of practical solutions to the costly problems of employee deviance.

Table 1

Percentage of Admissions for
Fast Food Respondents

Item #	Subject	% Admitting	Very Often	Often	Occasionally	Seldom	Never
Theft:							
1.	Taken merchandise/equipment	22	1	3	5	14	78
8.	Taken supplies for personal use	23	1	1	5	17	77
17.	Eaten food without paying	54	8	9	13	25	46
18.	Taken money without permission	6	1	-	1	5	94
19.	Overcharged/shortchanged on purpose	4	1	1	1	3	96
29.	Changed company records	5	1	1	2	3	95
22.	Refunds for things not purchased	6	1	1	1	4	94
26.	Taken property from co-workers	1	1	-	-	1	99
30.	Falsified company documents	3	-	-	1	3	97
Theft Support:							
7.	Employee discount used for friends	30	1	1	11	18	70
21.	Sold merchandise to friends at reduced price	18	1	1	4	12	82
27.	Helped person take company property	5	1	-	1	4	95
28.	Saw co-workers steal company cash or property	34	2	2	12	18	66
31.	Did not report theft by others	13	1	1	3	9	87
Time Theft:							
13.	Come to work late	71	3	4	19	45	29
14.	Left work early without permission	15	-	-	4	12	85
15.	Absent with no excuse	21	1	1	4	16	79
23.	Faking illness and calling in sick	29	1	1	6	22	71

Item #	Subject	% Admitting	Very Often	Often	Occasionally	Seldom	Never
Counterproductivity							
2.	Damaged property while horsing around	11	1	-	1	11	89
4.	Wasted company materials on purpose	8	1	1	1	7	92
A.	Consumed drugs or alcohol on job	8	1	-	1	6	92
B.	Argued with customers, co-workers or supervisors	78	3	6	29	41	22
C.	Fought with customers, co-workers or supervisors	14	-	1	2	11	86
24.	Did slow, sloppy work on purpose	22	1	2	4	17	78
E.	Came to work hungover form drugs or alcohol	23	1	1	7	15	77
Other Items:							
3.	Did not report wasted company materials	36	1		8	25	64
16.	Used company car without permission	5	-	-	1	5	95
25.	Faked injury for workmans compensation	1	1	-	-	1	99

N = 341

NOTE : 1. Some items may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.
2. Items A, B, C, D, and E are combined items to allow comparability across surveys.
3. Very often = 3 or more times a week
Often = 1 - 2 times a week
Occasionally = 1 - 2 times in one month
Seldom = Only once in 6 months
Never = Not even once

Table 2

Percentage of Admissions for Theft Factors for Fast Food Employees

Factor	% Admitting*
1. Cash/Property Theft	62%
2. Theft Support	53%
3. Time Theft	78%
4. Counterproductivity	84%
5. Other	35%
Total	96%

*Percent of respondents who admitted to the acts associated with the factor at least once in six months (i.e., responses of seldom, occasionally, often, or very often).

Table 3

Total Dollar Amount of Weekly Theft Admissions for Fast Food Respondents

	0	.50	$1	$2	$5	$10	$25	$50	$100	$500	Over $500
34. Merchandise Average Employee Takes	14%	4%	5%	13%	24%	19%	9%	7%	5%	1%	-
35. Merchandise You Take	73%	4%	5%	8%	6%	3%	1%	1%	1%	-	-
36. Money Average Employee Takes	38%	4%	7%	8%	15%	11%	10%	4%	2%	1%	-
37. Money You Take	94%	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	-	-	-	1%	-
Merchandise and Money Average Employee Takes (34 and 36)	11%	3%	4%	13%	17%	24%	10%	10%	8%	1%	1%
Merchandise and Money You Take (35 and 37)	72%	4%	5%	8%	5%	4%	1%	1%	1%	1%	-

N = 341

Table 4

Percentage of Admissions for Supermarket Respondents

Item #	Subject	% Admitting	Very Often	Often	Occasionally	Seldom	Never
Theft:							
1.	Taken merchandise/equipment	18%	1%	1%	3%	13%	82%
8.	Taken supplies for personal use	15%	1%	1%	2%	12%	85%
17.	Eaten food without paying	35%	3%	5%	8%	28%	65%
18.	Taken money without permission	1%	-	-	1%	1%	99%
19.	Overcharged/shortchanged on purpose	3%	-	-	1%	2%	98%
20.	Changed company records	1%	-	-	-	1%	99%
22.	Gave/received refunds for things not purchased	2%	-	-	1%	1%	98%
25.	Taken property from co-workers	1%	-	-	-	1%	99%
30.	Falsified company documents	1%	-	-	-	1%	99%
Theft Support:							
7.	Used employee discount for friends	11%	-	2%	3%	6%	89%
21.	Sold merchandise to friends at reduced price	9%	-	1%	2%	6%	91%
27.	Helped person take company property	4%	-	-	1%	3%	96%
28.	Saw co-workers steal company cash	4%	-	1%	1%	3%	96%
29.	Saw co-workers steal company property/merchandise	31%	1%	2%	10%	17%	69%
31.	Did not report theft by others	17%	1%	3%	4%	10%	83%
Time Theft:							
13.	Come to work late	72%	1%	6%	21%	42%	28%
14.	Left work early without permission	14%	-	-	3%	11%	86%
15.	Absent with no legitimate excuse	17%	-	-	1%	16%	83%
23.	Faking illness and calling in sick	26%	-	-	6%	20%	74%

Item #	Subject	% Admitting	Very Often	Often	Occasionally	Seldom	Never
Counterproductivity							
2.	Damaged property while horsing around	18%	-	1%	3%	14%	82%
4.	Wasted company materials on purpose	5%	-	-	1%	4%	95%
5.	Consumed drugs on job	2%	1%	-	-	1%	98%
6.	Consumed alcohol on job	3%	-	-	1%	3%	97%
9.	Argued with customers	37%	1%	1%	4%	31%	63%
10.	Argued with co-workers or supervisors	61%	1%	4%	28%	36%	39%
11.	Fought with customers	4%	-	1%	2%	2%	96%
12.	Fought with co-workers or supervisors	7%	-	1%	1%	6%	93%
24.	Did slow, sloppy work on purpose	23%	-	1%	2%	20%	77%
32.	Came to work hungover from alcohol	18%	-	1%	4%	14%	82%
33.	Came to work hungover from drugs	2%	1%	-	1%	1%	98%
Other Items:							
3.	Did not report wasted company materials	30%	1%	1%	7%	21%	70%
16.	Used company car without permission	1%	-	-	-	1%	99%
25.	Faked injury for workmans compensation	-	-	-	-	-	100%

N = 234

NOTE : 1. Some items may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

3. Very often = 3 or more times a week
Often = 1 - 2 times a week
Occasionally = 1 - 2 times in one month
Seldom = Only once in 6 months
Never = Not even once

Table 5

Percentage of Admissions for Theft Factors
for Supermarket Employees

Factor	% Admitting*
1. Cash/Property Theft	43%
2. Theft Support	39%
3. Time Theft	77%
4. Counterproductivity	75%
5. Other	29%
Total	94%

*Percent of respondents who admitted to the acts associated with the factor at least once in six months (i.e., responses of seldom, occasionally, often, or very often).

Table 6

Total Dollar Amount of Weekly Theft Admissions for Supermarket Respondents

	$0	.50	$1	$2	$5	$10	$25	$50	$100	$200	$500	Over $500
34. Merchandise Average Employee Takes	28%	7%	8%	12%	15%	18%	6%	6%	4%	2%	-	-
35. Merchandise You Take	82%	5%	4%	4%	3%	2%	1%	1%	-	-	-	-
36. Money Average Employee Takes	58%	3%	6%	7%	9%	6%	6%	3%	2%	1%	-	-
37. Money You Take	98%	1%	-	-	1%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Merchandise and Money Average Employee Takes (34 and 36)	27%	6%	7%	14%	11%	14%	6%	6%	7%	3%	-	-
Merchandise and Money You Take (35 and 37)	88%	6%	4%	4%	3%	2%	1%	1%	-	-	-	-

Notes. 1. N = 234 except for Item 34: N = 225, Item 35: N = 233, Item 36: N = 255

2. Missing values were treated as 0 for summations.

Table 7

Average Annual Supermarket Employee Theft Estimates

Method of Estimation	Single Employee	150 Employee Store	25 Store Chain	50 Store Chain	100 Store Chain
Amount of Actual Respondent Admissions	$44.72	$6,708	$167,700	$335,400	$670,800
Amount Perceived Taken By "Average Employee"	$1,209	$181,350	$4,533,750	$9,067,500	$18,135,000

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